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The native of the large cities of Senegal, one from Saint-Louis in particular, is evolving, but his expenses for ceremonies of "pleasure," baptism and especially marriage, are evolving also, and unhappily much more rapidly. The young man looks for a way to be able to manage this vertiginous soaring of expenses; he struggles, if not to stop it, to curb it at least. Some associations have been formed in order to agree on a fixed sum which one [9] [Fig. 6 appears here] [10] is not to exceed, as for the expenses of marriage. They scarcely seem to give the anticipated result, their members not facing up to the strength of character required for the attacks, with innovation as the object. Nevertheless, one should cite the nearly general agreement of the members on the precept to "defy the tempest" and to pay no attention to the desires of their parents, parents-in-law, and spouses for having pompous nuptials. Those among them who do not feel capable of restraining their vanity by acting "poverty-stricken" avail themselves of the facilities that they have for changing posts and contracting bush marriages (1). Most of them

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> 1. For the men and women of Saint-Louis, any woman who does not live in Saint-Louis or has no ancestors in this city is from the bush and hence is of mundane breeding and an inadequate housekeeper.

remain single.

What is the origin of these high expenses? We are going to look for it in the local customs, without any expectation of finding it in former times or in the laws of the Koran, which we have merely submitted to, and which in any case we are trying to adapt to our fancy. What are the phases of marriage? What expenses does each one require? We shall give them specifically as we consider the single case of a man from Saint-Louis. Saint-Louis is the "center of good taste" for the colony and serves as the model for it. Finally, do these exaggerated expenses have

[10 cont.]
369 consequences with regard to celibacy and the orientation of
581 manners and customs? This will be the last part of this too brief
sketch.

What is the origin of the expenses?

It is in large part in the social organization of the Senegalese Blacks before the introduction of Islam and before the French peace.

584 Marriage then depended upon the wishes of the fathers and mothers of the spouses. The marriage portion imposed was
583 enormous, even though proportional to the social rank of the fiancé and to his wealth. It was made up of captives and animals. In return, the wife, in order to maintain her dignity in the eyes of the husband and the co-spouses, joined her new residence with often as much wealth as she had received. This per-
[582] haps is the origin of the frequent unions between cousins, uncle and niece, aunt and nephew. The purpose of this for the family was to keep its wealth concentrated.

As Moslems, we have introduced the Koran and the Koranic marriage portion, different for a slave and for a free woman, with an assessment proportional to the wealth of the husband, but which is principle requires no costly pomp and which is not preoccupied with griots [singers, poets, storytellers].

With the French peace, the captives have been withdrawn from the exchanges, and the idea of replacing them with gold, money, or animals (now very vulgar property) prevails.

369 But with freedom the horizon was also widened. The
584 suitors, formerly localized and nearly always known in advance,
178 have multiplied. One originally from the Fouta is quickly transported to Sène and, without bloodshed, without abduction, can marry a girl whom many young men dream of winning. The rivalries, which not long ago were settled on the field of battle or by thrusts of daggers, have perpetuated themselves under the indifferent eyes of the Whites, but on the field of marriage and by thrusts of gold or banknotes (diamalé, rivalry for a woman).

[12 cont.]

369 of humiliation, they must, as must he, show proof of generosity.
585 How does one go about "decorating these persons"?
565 There are the griots, the jewelers, the cobblers, and also ... the captives; the husband gives 1,000 francs or more to each grouping, and his relatives a supplementary sum, always distinct from that given by the husband, of such a nature that each caste receives 10,000 or 20,000 francs or more. This sum will be divided under the direction of the caste head.

585 This ceremony concludes the marriage, because im-
369 mediately, for three streets around, there is nothing but hysteria and hubbub, with griots coming and going, as well as drivers (3).

> 3. We have not said anything about the expense for the food. Each morning during the whole period of the nuptials, the husband must give a sum large enough to provide food for all of his guests and those of the wife. It is obligatory for the parents of the wife to send supper to the mother of the husband on the first day. I have seen a case that merits being noted. On the occasion of a recent marriage, the parents-in-law sent from Saint-Louis to Louga a wagon of food, 25 large basins, "tolis," containing 25 foods estimated in 1939 at 4,000 francs, deducted from the meals of the mother, which were, it was said, transported by five or six carts.

Consequences of the high price of marriage on the manners and customs

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584 Such expenses greatly hinder young people from marrying.
581 Most of them, if they do not wish to remain single, are obliged to leave their city to contract bush marriages, which are almost

[12 cont.]

369 178 [584] [681] [562] always temporary marriages, so great is the attachment of the Saint-Louis man for his city and for the girls of his city. Although this situation is very unfortunate for the boys, it is less so for the girls. Although some of them are still sacrificed very young to rich old men, many wait to meet the young man of their choice before marrying. The marriages of infant girls have become very rare: the girls of Saint-Louis now marry at a [587] reasonable age, at about 20, much like French girls. It is a profound change. Convinced of being obliged to wait a long 369 178 562 time for a husband, they are acquiring an independence that their mothers have not known; they go out, they go to dances where they dance European dances, they dare to sit at a table [191] in a café, they dress according to their taste, they speak French. They go to school without constraint, which is also a revolution, and they, like the boys, look for a salaried position, which allows them a very broad life, like single persons, and which, within the household, frees them from the guardianship of the [595] husband. Polygamy, which the modern [evoluées] women generally refuse, is more and more rare in Saint-Louis (4).

4. A polygamous husband most often shuns the modern women for the sake of peace in his household, because the personal earnings of these women permit them to buy finery other than that which he periodically distributes to his spouses, and this provokes jealousy and quarrels. Recently a young female official was supposed to enter the home of a Saint-Louis official as the third or fourth wife. She opposed her parents and married according to her inclination.

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Educated girls have long been judged quite harshly, but this is passing. Many of the young girls who married against the wishes of their parents have been quickly forgiven when the latter saw the good appearance of the household and the affluence

[12 cont.]

369 178 662 [511] that [13] prevailed there. This has been made obvious by the war; the modern households have suffered from economic difficulties much less than the others, because the women proved to be much more skillful in getting out of difficulties with the little that could be obtained.

369 581 [556] Will the custom of such sumptuous expenses with regard to marriage last? It is difficult to tell. It evidently greatly satisfies the pride of the man of Saint-Louis by exhibiting his wealth and his generosity. If it makes marriage difficult for young people, this is very regrettable, because the precious years of youth are lost and the children will come too late; it makes marriage the great affair of one's life, which is good, [562] and it has contributed in a very large measure to the freeing of the girls, which, except for some extravagances, is a great benefit.

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17: Mercier--20 S-5 (1953-1954) 1954 MS37 Senegal MS37

/21 cont./

as the extremely variable extension of marriage prohibitions shows.

121
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The local unit coincides more or less completely with the kinship group delineated by the line of dominant filiation; a village quarter is in principle the habitat of a given lineage.

Marriage is not a commitment between two individuals, guaranteed by a state or religious body (3), but the conclusion [581]

3. This guarantee intervenes among the Moslems, but in most cases does not play the essential role.

of an agreement between two kinship groups, an agreement which assumes, directly or indirectly, the form of an exchange of forces. The networks of matrimonial alliances, while permitting each kinship group to maintain and increase its substance, create bonds, constantly reinforced, between diverse groups, thus assuring the cohesion of the ethnic group that their assemblage composes. Therefore, in the vast majority of cases, one does not conceive of marriage outside the ethnic group. [582]

Even in the systems of patrilineal filiation, the maternal line is likewise a source of obligations. In particular, in most populations -- and very especially in Senegal -- the role of the uterine uncle is important (4). [604]

4. Cf., as far as the Lebou are concerned, G. Balandier and P. Mercier, op. cit., passim.

It is important to keep these basic elements in mind in the course of the account that we shall give about the problems that are posed at present.

/22/ We shall first give some figures expressing certain